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Amendment C



CLAIM AMENDMENTS/
CLAIM LISTING

Claims 1-23 (Canceled)

1 24. (previously presented) A method of joining foam core panels as in claim 59
2 wherein
3 said panels each comprise a top rail, and
4 the step of securing the one panel to the overhead support comprises threading at
5 least one screw through the overhead support and into the top rail of the one panel,
6 the step of securing the other panel to the overhead support comprises threading at
7 least one screw through the overhead support and into the top rail of the other panel, and
8 the steps of securing the leveler plate to the one panel and to the other panel
9 comprise threading screws into the top rail of said one panel and into the top rail of said
10 other panel, respectively.

1 25. (previously presented) The method of joining foam core panels as in claim 59
2 wherein
3 the step of securing the leveler plate to the one panel is performed after the step of
4 inserting the joining member into the slot of the one panel and before the step of mounting
5 the one panel on the overhead support.

1 26. (previously presented) A method of joining foam core panels as in claim 59

2 wherein

3 said one panel further comprises a bottom rail and the slot in said panel extends

4 from the top of the panel and terminates at the bottom rail, and

5 comprising the further step of disassembling the panels so joined, by means of the
6 following steps,

7 unsecuring said other panel from the overhead support,

8 unsecuring said other panel from the leveler plate, and

9 displacing said other panel downwardly to withdraw the joining member from the
10 slot in said other panel, as downward frictional forces on the joining member are resisted by
11 the bottom rail of the one panel.

Claims 27-30 (Cancelled)

1 31. (previously presented) A method of customizing foam core panels as in claim 61,

2 wherein

3 the removing step is performed through the use of a portable, electrically powered
4 saw, and

5 the step of forming a slot is performed through the use of a portable, electrically
6 powered router,

7 whereby the customizing can be done on the installation job site.

1 32. (previously presented) A method of customizing foam core panels as in claim 61,

wherein

the step of forming said longitudinal slot comprises

forming the outer portion of said slot by employing a first pass with a straight router

bit, and

forming undercut portions of said slot by employing a second pass with a router bit.

33. (currently amended) An assembly of foam core panels comprising a pair of panels in joined relation wherein

each panel comprises

a foam slab of foamed plastic material having opposed lateral surfaces spaced

apart by the thickness of the slab,

the lateral surface area of the panel being defined at least in part by the lateral

surface area of the slab, and

veneers, respectively bonded to the lateral surfaces of the slab, and

each panel has an abutting surface formed and defined by a portion of the its foam

slab,

~~said panels having, respectively, abutting surfaces of foamed material in engaged relation with each other; and~~

means for joining said panels with said abutting surfaces held in engaged relation ,

characterized in that the joining means comprise

slots formed, respectively, in said foam slabs, said slots extending inwardly from said

16 abutting surfaces,
17 each slot being undercut to form retaining surfaces facing away from the
18 abutting surface in which it is formed, and
19 a joining member inserted into said slots,
20 said joining member having retaining surfaces
21 respectively engaging the retaining surfaces of said slots,
22 thereby maintaining the panels in joined relation with said abutting surfaces
23 maintained in abutting and engaged relation.

24 34. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33 wherein
25 each abutting surface comprises a side edge face of the panel defined by said slab
26 and the veneers secured thereto.

1 35. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 34, wherein
2 said panels have a rectangular configuration and are vertically disposed with the
3 abutting side edge surfaces also vertically disposed, and further wherein
4 each of said panels further comprises a top rail overlying said slab and coextensive
5 with the top surface thereof and a bottom rail underlying said slab and coextensive with the
6 bottom surface thereof, and
7 the joining means further comprise
8 undercut slots formed in said top and bottom rails as continuations of the undercut

9 slots in said foam slab, and the joining member extends into the undercut slots formed in
10 said top and bottom rails,

11 whereby the forces imposed on the foam slabs in maintaining the panels in joined
12 relation are minimized.

1 36. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 35 further
2 characterized in that

3 the outer veneers disposed on opposite lateral surfaces of the core are also
4 coextensive with the side faces of the top and bottom rails

5 and further wherein

6 the top rails of the joined panels form a first set of rails and the bottom rails of the
7 joined panels form a second set of rails, and further wherein the ends of the undercut slots
8 in one set of rails extend from the slab to a horizontal surface of said one set of rails, and

9 further wherein a veneer is secured to each of said horizontal surfaces of said one
10 set of rails,

11 thereby concealing the ends of the slots in said one set of rails from view.

1 37. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 36 wherein
2 means are provided in at least one of said top rails for connecting the panels to an
3 overhead support; and

4 said one set of rails are bottom rails.

1 38. (currently amended) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33 further
2 characterized in that
3 the slots extending inwardly from the abutting surfaces ~~faces~~ of the panels, extend
4 inwardly at right angles thereto, and
5 the bottoms of the slots are undercut to form said slot retaining surfaces.

1 39. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 38 wherein
2 the joining member has
3 a relatively narrow, central web which is snugly received by the portions of
4 the T-shaped slots adjacent the abutting surfaces, and
5 thickened outer ends at its opposite ends, on which the retaining surfaces of
6 the joining member are formed.

1 40. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 34 wherein
2 said panels have a rectangular configuration and are vertically disposed, and further
3 wherein
4 the panels are angularly disposed, one relative to the other,
5 the abutting surfaces are mitered to compositely define the angled relation between
6 the panels, and
7 the portions of the slots adjacent the abutting surfaces are aligned and

8 the joining member has a central web which is snugly received by the portions of
9 the slots which are adjacent the abutting surfaces.

1 41. (Previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 40 wherein
2 the outer end portions of the slots are aligned and
3 the bottom portions of the slots are tapered toward each other from the widest
4 portions of the retaining surfaces, thereby minimizing the material removed in forming said
5 slots.

1 42. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 34 wherein
2 said panels have a rectangular configuration and are vertically disposed, and further
3 wherein
4 the panels are angular disposed one relative to the other,
5 the abutting surfaces are mitered to compositely define the angled relation between
6 the panels, and
7 the portions of the slots adjacent to the abutting surfaces are angularly disposed to
8 each other and the
9 the joining member has a central web which is angled to be received by outer
10 portions of the slots.

1 43. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33 wherein

an angled camming surface is provided on the joining member at one end thereof, said camming surface being adapted to draw said panels toward each other when the joining member is slid lengthwise into said slots, as the panels are being joined.

44. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33 wherein the volume of material in the joining member is minimized by passageway means extending longitudinally thereof.

45. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33 wherein the volume of material in the joining member is minimized by the retaining surfaces thereof being defined by longitudinally extending, thin walled portions.

46. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 45 wherein the joining member comprises

a longitudinally extending, relatively thin, solid, central section and

longitudinally extending, thin walled portions at the opposite sides of the central section,

the thin wall sections extend outwardly from the planes of the opposite sides

of the central section, to define the said retaining surfaces and then are

angled, on opposite sides of the central section away from the central

section and toward each other.

1 47. (currently amended) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33 wherein
2 the panels are angularly disposed one to the other,
3 one of said abutting surfaces comprises a side edge face of one of said panels as
4 defined by the slab thereof and the veneers secured thereto;
5 the other abutting surface is comprises a portion of the lateral surface the other
6 panel.

1 48. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33, wherein
2 said slots comprise a first set of slots and
3 the means for joining the panels further comprise
4 a second set of slots formed, respectively, in said foam slabs generally parallel to the
5 first set of slots,
6 said second set of slots comprising second slots extending inwardly from said
7 abutting surfaces thereof,
8 each second slot being undercut to form retaining surfaces facing away
9 from the abutting surface in which it is formed, and
10 a second joining member inserted into said second slots,
11 said second joining member having retaining surfaces respectively engaging the
12 retaining surfaces of said second slots.

1 54. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 53 wherein
2 at least one of said panels has a bottom rail,
3 the slot in said one panel extends through the top rail, downwardly through the
4 foam core and terminates at the top of the bottom rail,
5 whereby, when the assembly is dismantled, the one panel may remain mounted,
6 and the other panel may be lowered to disengage it from said one panel, and the bottom
7 rail resists the downward force on the joining member during such removal.

1 55. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33, wherein
2 said panels have a rectangular configuration and are vertically disposed, and further
3 wherein
4 the panels have a substantial height,
5 the joining member is disposed in the lower end portions of said slots, and
6 further comprising
7 an alignment strip disposed in said slots above said joining member, said alignment
8 strip having a thickness approximating the width of the slots adjacent the abutting surfaces to
9 thereby maintain the panels in aligned relation, and
10 a second joining member disposed in the upper end portions of said slots, said
11 second joining member having retaining surfaces respectively engaging the retaining surfaces
12 of at the upper end portions of said slots, thereby maintaining the upper end portions of the

13 panels in joined relation.

1 56. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 55, wherein
2 the upper surfaces of the panels are recessed and
3 the upper end portion of the upper joining member is disposed in said recess, and
4 the upper end portion of the upper joining member has a finger grip for facilitating
5 its removal in disassembling said joined panels.

1 57. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 55, wherein
2 each of said panels further comprises a top rail and a bottom rail for providing
3 structural integrity to the panels.

1 58. (currently amended) A method of forming an assembly of foam core panels
2 comprising a pair of panels in joined relation wherein
3 each panel comprises
4 a foam slab of foamed plastic material having opposed lateral surfaces spaced
5 apart by the thickness of the slab,
6 the lateral surface area of the panel being defined at least in part by the lateral
7 surface area of the slab, and
8 veneers, respectively bonded to the lateral surfaces of the slab and
9 ~~coextensive therewith;~~

1 49. (Previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 48, wherein
2 the second joining member has the same cross section as the first mentioned joining
3 member.

1 50. (currently amended) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33, wherein
2 the retaining surfaces of the slots slot are defined by a solid resinous polymer
3 material.

Cancel 51.

1 52. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 33, which
2 forms a valance, said assembly further comprising
3 means for mounting each of said pair of panels from overhead support means and
4 a leveler plate secured to the top surfaces of the joined panels and providing the
5 primary means for vertically aligning the panels thereby providing an accurate vertical
6 alignment, therebetween, irrespective of any vertical misalignment in the means for
7 mounting said panels from the overhead support means.

1 53. (previously presented) An assembly of foam core panels as in claim 52, wherein
2 each panel comprises a top rail which
3 is engaged by the means for mounting the panels from the overhead support
4 means, and
5 to which the leveler plate is secured.

each panel has an abutting surface formed and defined by a portion of its foam slab,
characterized in that

~~each panel has a side edge surface~~

~~defined by the thickness of the slab and by the side edges of the veneers that~~

~~are bonded to that slab, and~~

~~adapted to be brought into abutting relation with the side edge surface of the~~

~~other panel; and~~

the slab of each panel has a slot slots formed[,] respectively[,] therein and in said
foam slabs, said slots extending inwardly from said the abutting surface surfaces thereof,

each slot being undercut to form retaining surfaces facing away from the edge

abutting surface in which it is formed,

said method comprising the steps of

bringing the two panels into an assembled relation with said ~~side edge~~ abutting
surfaces in abutting and engaged relation and

connecting the two panels in this assembled relation by longitudinally introducing a
joining member into said slots so as to bring retaining surfaces on said joining member into
engagement with the undercut, retaining surfaces on the respective panels.

59. (currently amended) A method of forming an assembly of foam core panels as in claim 58 wherein

the panels are vertically disposed;

the abutting surface of each panel is a side edge surface of that panel defined by the thickness of the slab and by the side edges of the veneers that are bonded to that slab; and

the ~~abutable~~ abutting surfaces and the slots therein are vertically disposed, and

comprising the further steps of

first mounting one of said panels on an overhead support,

disposing the joining member in the undercut slot of said one panel, with a portion the joining member projecting outwardly from the vertical side edge surface thereof,

securing a leveler plate on the top of said one panel to thereby capture said joining member in the slot thereof, said leveler plate being mounted so as to project beyond the vertical side edge surface of said one panel,

positioning the other panel below the mounted panel with its abutting surface ~~vertical edge face~~ aligned with the abutting ~~vertical side edge~~ surface of the mounted panel,

displacing said other panel upwardly into engagement with the leveler plate to capture the outwardly projecting portion of the joining member in the vertical slot of said other panel,

thereby bringing the two panels into an assembled relation and introducing a the joining member into said slots,

and the further steps of

22 securing the other panel to the overhead support, and
23 securing the other panel to the leveler plate.

1 60. (currently amended) A method of forming an assembly of foam core panels as in
2 claim 58 wherein

3 the panels are vertically disposed;

4 the abutting surface of each panel is a side edge surface of that panel defined by the
5 thickness of the slab and by the side edges of the veneers that are bonded to that slab;

6 said slots extend vertically along the height of the panels, and

7 ~~the abutable surfaces and the slots therein are vertically disposed, and~~

8 ~~wherein the abutable surfaces and the slots therein are vertically disposed, and~~

9 at least the lower and upper end portions of the bottoms of said slots are undercut
10 to define retaining surfaces, and

11 comprising the further steps of

12 inserting a joining member into the lower end portion of the slot in one of said
13 panels, said joining member projecting outwardly from the vertical abutting surface edge
14 face of said one panel,

15 inserting an alignment strip into the slot in said one panel, said alignment strip being
16 disposed above said joining member and having a portion of uniform thickness projecting
17 beyond the edge surface of said one panel,

18 positioning the other of said panels with its side-edge abutting surface in opposed,

19 spaced relationship from the ~~vertical side edge~~ abutting surface of said one panel, and with
20 the lower end of the other panel above the upper end of the joining member projecting
21 from the one panel,

22 displacing the other panel toward the one panel, to bring their ~~vertical side edge~~
23 abutting surfaces into engagement and simultaneously introduce the alignment strip into the
24 vertical slot of the other panel,

25 after the ~~side edge~~ abutting surfaces are engaged, displacing the other panel
26 downwardly to capture the joining member in the lower end portion of the vertical slot in
27 the other panel, and

28 inserting a second joining member in the upper end portions of the slots of the two
29 panels, said second joining member having opposed retaining surfaces which are thereby
30 engaged with the undercut portions of the slots.

1 61. (currently amended) A method of forming an assembly of foam core panels as in
2 claim 58

3 wherein it is necessary that a portion of a panel be removed to provide a desired
4 panel length, comprising the further steps, performed prior to joining the panels, of

5 marking one of the foam core ~~panels~~ panels to indicate the portion of the panel that
6 must be removed to provide a desired panel length for a given installation,

7 removing the portion of the panel required to provide a desired panel length, and in
8 so doing providing a freshly cut ~~side edge~~ abutting surface on the panel, and

9 forming an undercut slot longitudinally of said freshly cut abutting surface edge face.

1 62. (previously presented) A method of forming an assembly of foam core panels as
2 in claim 58 where it is desired to provide wear resistant surfaces for said undercut slots,
3 said method including the further steps of

4 providing a liner of plastic polymer material having plastic memory, said liner being
5 formed with an outline that corresponds to the outline of the slot, but is angularly divergent
6 relative thereto,

7 coating the outer surface portions of the liner with an adhesive,

8 forcing said liner through the opening of said slot to the bottom thereof in a fashion
9 that enables the plastic memory of the polymer material to bring the adhesive coated
10 surfaces of the liner into engagement with the surfaces of the slot,

11 whereby a solid resinous polymer, wear resistant retaining surface is provided for the
12 slot.